

At Your Store

WHAT'S NEW AT YOUR CO-OP?

June Co-op Advantage Sales begin Wednesday, June 7.

MEMBER APPRECIATION DAYS

Sundays: June 11 and July 16
Shop 8 am - 9 pm

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

All members are welcome.

Check the front entrance for dates and times

THE CO-OPERATOR DEADLINE

June 1 for the July 2006 Issue
All submissions and ads are due.

For more information, call Member Services at 412.242.3598.

JOIN US FOR A CO-OP ORIENTATION NIGHT

Learn the secrets every member wants to know **EVERY TUESDAY — 7pm**
Customer Service desk

Sign up or call 412.242.3598

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East End Food Co-op

7516 Meade Street Pittsburgh, PA 15208
412-242-3598 www.eastendfood.coop

A Visit to the Kretschmann Farm

by Jesse Sharrard

The Kretschmann farm in Rochester, PA, yields excellent produce because Don Kretschmann is a dedicated farmer who takes obvious pride in his work. Ask him why he, a trained psychologist, started farming in the first place and he'll tell you, "It's something to believe in. I can be a purist and do things the way I think they should be done."



Don Kretschmann in front of his greenhouse

When Don and his wife Becky began their farm thirty-five years ago, it was on a 38-acre plot. Over time they have reassembled the bulk of the original farm plot, about 80 acres. "Kind of a reverse subdivision," says Don, with a tongue-in-cheek reference to the sprawl just south of his farm along Route 19.

Much of the farm is still wooded and huge brambles of raspberries grow wild at the edge of the trees. It would be easy to think that all of his crops grew themselves out of a pastoral zest for life, but nothing could be less true. A great deal of manpower goes into caring for the fields that wrap around the hillside.

Don's labors begin with the soil, mixed on-site, in which he plants his seeds. "We're one of the last holdouts from pre-mixed soil, I think," Don explains. "I don't see why everybody doesn't do it: it's simple, and it saves a ton of money." He then ushers the seedlings through the greenhouse as quickly as possible. "Greenhouse plants tend to be flimsy in the stem. You get them

out into the elements and they become much sturdier plants." Instead, Don puts them in hot boxes—outdoor spaces he can cover in the case of frost.

Next, he has to get the plants in the ground. It's late April and many of the early fields here are already tilled and/or planted; but the ground where later crops will go is still thick with winter covers like alfalfa, rye, and hairy vetch. "I like to leave the cover crops there as long as possible," Don says. "Give them a chance to bulk up. Even ten tons of compost per acre of land is no match for the bulk and nutrients you can get from them." There's no arguing with the results: when his seasonal crops are in full production, you'll find a shopping list of produce-aisle staples steadily leaving his farm.

The day I visited, the apple orchards were in full bloom. Apples are one of Don's favorite crops, and he's in the midst of planting a new orchard. The older trees are his "learning trees," he explains. "They're getting a little bit aged now," he says, "maybe if I'd pruned them differently when they were young, they'd be in better shape now," but the only way he knows that



A farmworker tends to basil seedlings in the greenhouse



Apple blossoms in full glory

now is by his own experience. Don calls out the name of each variety as we pass through the rows of trees. It was tough (if not impossible) for me to tell that the trees had changed. When we get to one section, Don stops the cart. This type, he tells me, is called Pristine, one of the first scab-immune varieties. Scab, he says, is one of the main reasons that people spray trees. By planting varieties that would not fall ill, he made it easier to grow apples without the use of synthetic pesticides—part of what he believes in as a farmer. "People like to believe that we're above the chain of evolution," he notes, "but what they ought to realize is that we're a part of it." 🌿

The Kretschmann Farm —

Don or Becky Kretschmann
257 Zeigler Rd.
Rochester, PA 15074
(724) 452-7189
www.kretschmannfarm.com

Produce Available —

At the East End Food Co-op or by subscription to his Community Supported Agriculture Group (CSA).

Crops Include —

Apples, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, fennel, herbs, kale, Lettuces (several varieties), onions, parsley, potatoes, peppers, radishes, rhubarb, spinach, squashes (summer and winter), tomatoes, tomatillos, turnips, zucchini, and more.

DON'T MISS MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY — JUNE 11
MEMBERS RECEIVE 10% OFF SHELF PRICE ALL DAY! SAMPLES AND TASTINGS 8AM TO 4PM

All members are welcome to attend the Co-op Board Meetings. Check the bulletin board in the front vestibule for dates and times.



WE OWN IT -

